



Democracy Dies in Darkness

Leaked Stephen Miller emails show Trump's point man on immigration promoted white nationalism, SPLC reports

November 13, 2019 More than **6 years ago**



By [Kim Bellware](#)

In the lead-up to the 2016 election, White House senior adviser Stephen Miller sought to promote white nationalism, far-right extremist ideas and anti-immigrant rhetoric through the conservative website Breitbart, a report released Tuesday by the Southern Poverty Law Center claims.

The report is the first installment in a series that draws on more than 900 emails that Miller sent to a Breitbart writer over a 15-month period between 2015 and 2016 and that were given to the SPLC. The report describes emails from Miller as overwhelmingly focused on race and immigration and characterizes him as obsessed with ideas such as “white genocide” (a conspiracy theory associated with white supremacists) and sharply curbing nonwhite immigration.

In the wake of the news Tuesday, at least three members of Congress, including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), called for Miller to resign.

Miller declined to comment Wednesday. White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said via email Tuesday that she had not seen the report but called the SPLC “an utterly-discredited, long-debunked far-left smear organization.”

“They are beneath public discussion, even in The Washington Post,” Grisham said of the civil rights nonprofit.

Among the more damning exchanges highlighted in the SPLC report, one describes how Miller directed a Breitbart reporter to aggregate stories from the white supremacist journal American Renaissance, or “AmRen,” for stories that emphasize crimes committed by immigrants and nonwhite people. According to emails excerpted by SPLC, Miller moved the conversation from email to a phone call; Katie McHugh, the recipient of the call, confirmed to The Post the timeline and that Miller discussed an American Renaissance story.

In another email SPLC highlights, Miller is apparently upset that Amazon removed Confederate battle flag merchandise from its marketplace in the wake of the 2015 Charleston church shooting. (Amazon chief executive Jeff Bezos owns The Post.)

Others reportedly show him promoting “The Camp of the Saints,” a racist French novel popular among white nationalists.

SPLC’s report indicates that Miller was widely successful in molding the race- and immigration-focused stories that appeared on Breitbart. It repeatedly details how an email from Miller corresponded to a related article later appearing on the site.

According to an August 2019 Post profile, Miller is “the singular force behind the Trump administration’s immigration agenda,” which produced the family separation policy affecting people seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border and the 2017 executive order to ban travelers to the United States from majority-Muslim countries. He is aware of the criticism of his beliefs. In response to claims that he holds racist views, Miller, who is Jewish, previously told The Post that anyone who labels him a racist is “an ignorant fool, a liar and a reprobate who has no place in civilized society.”

The emails were provided to the SPLC by McHugh, a former Breitbart writer and editor who exchanged scores of messages with Miller during his time transitioning from a press aide for then-U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) to a senior adviser with then-candidate Donald Trump’s presidential campaign.

Breitbart fired McHugh in 2017 over anti-Muslim tweets; McHugh has since denounced her association with white nationalism and the far right.

McHugh “is well aware of the risks she took in giving us the material and confirming information,” said SPLC investigator Michael Edison Hayden, who wrote the report. “I think that’s incredibly brave.”

The SPLC shared with The Post seven pages of emails that are directly cited in the report by Hayden.

The Post has not independently verified the emails, though McHugh confirmed to The Post on Wednesday that she exchanged the emails with Miller referenced in the SPLC report. Hayden told The Post that he made contact with McHugh earlier this year as she was formerly on the periphery of several extremist groups he was following. McHugh was familiar with his work, Hayden said, and mentioned having materials she wanted to show him. After allowing him to view the emails on what Hayden recalled was “a very old computer,” McHugh ultimately decided to release the emails to him.

“What Stephen Miller sent to me in those emails has become policy at the Trump administration,” McHugh said to the SPLC.

During his time as a press aide for Sessions, Miller was known to send a “massive volume of information regarding U.S. immigration policy to reporters at all times,” McHugh told The Post. The narrative of that information conformed to Miller’s views of immigration and immigration restrictions, she said.

While Miller references mainstream news outlets — including Vox and MSNBC — among the links in the seven pages of emails reviewed by The Post, McHugh said the fact that Miller’s emails also include links to sites prominent within white nationalism is notable.

“I would ask why a high-level staffer working in a senator’s office is distributing links from white nationalists’ sites — and [ask] how he became familiar with them, or why he was comfortable sharing them with a news outlet,” she said, referring to Breitbart. Sites like American Renaissance would not be known by mainstream readers, she said. “It’s well-known in white nationalist circles but very obscure to even Republicans.”

Several years on from the email exchanges, Miller is probably at the height of his power within the West Wing. As The Post [previously reported](#), Miller is one of Trump's longest-tenured advisers — along with Kellyanne Conway, and Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner — and the most influential adviser shaping the Trump administration's immigration policies.

Hayden, who typically reports on white nationalism and neo-Nazis, said that while he was conscious of the Trump administration “as any American would be,” he wasn't paying particular attention to Miller.

“I never had any ambition of writing any kind of piece exposing Stephen Miller. I took him to be part of the Trump culture but not something that was in my lane.” Looking at Miller's emails changed that, Hayden said.

Excerpted emails shared with The Post show Miller drawing on stories from outlets such as the anti-immigration white nationalist site VDare and the conspiracy theory website Infowars and sending them to McHugh. Miller appears to urge McHugh to write about the stories and discusses how to frame them and push them to prominence on Breitbart's site.

After reading several profiles about Miller to understand his background, Hayden said he was struck by how Miller was portrayed — and dismayed that there was seemingly little effort made to examine the sources from which Miller drew his beliefs.

“I remember The Washington Post profile had at the end: ‘He was running’ — this idea that [Miller’s] always busy, he’s always working.” Another profile, in the Atlantic, Hayden recalled, described Miller looking like he was “posing for a cologne ad.”

“A lot of profiles in the liberal press have treated him like some sort of policy wonk bad boy — almost romanticized him,” Hayden said. “The most important takeaway for me is that Stephen Miller found the basis for his ideas on websites that traffic in hate, and made it clear in his emails.”

Clarification: An earlier version of this report characterized a discussion between McHugh and Miller about the American Renaissance website as an email. According to McHugh, it took place across email and a phone call.

Read more: